
Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers

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Preface *Linda Green*

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Inquiries should be sent to:

Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Preface

This edition of the Kroeber Anthropological Society (KAS) Papers brings together a collection of essays delivered during two successive plenary sessions of the annual KAS meetings. In the spring of 1986 several well-known scholars in the sub-field of medical anthropology participated in a symposium on "The Anthropology of Sickness", and the following year distinguished psychological anthropologists were invited to discuss their recent work in a forum entitled "Self, Experience, and Emotion." The essays collected here address seemingly diverse issues in social-cultural anthropology, yet two themes emerge: the importance of culture in its broadest sense and the interrelationship between culture, society and the individual. In *Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986: 19), James Clifford has suggested that "culture is contested, temporal and emergent" and "representation and explanation — both by insiders and outsiders — is implied in this emergence." The following articles place some of the salient issues of contemporary anthropology at center stage.

In her article on the cultural construction of menopause in Japan, Lock is critical of the role of biomedicine in shaping clinical "facts" to "fit" a prescribed (and changing) cultural role for women. Leslie discusses the changing social relations of Ayurvedic medicine in terms of the history and economics of the indigenous pharmaceuticals industry. Kleinman proposes a fusing of medical anthropology with medical epidemiology which could lead to a "radical breakthrough in how we conceive of the nexus of biology, culture, sickness and society" and a "rethinking of medicine as a human enterprise." Scheper-Hughes, on the other hand, takes an adversarial position toward the hegemonic role of Western biomedicine in legitimating the status quo, and advocates the work of a "critically applied medical anthropology" to operate "at the margins, questioning premises, and subjecting epistemologies that represent powerful, political interests to oppositional thinking". Taussig's "Nervous System" casts us into the penumbra between the sign and the signifier where the intellectual enterprise (of oppression) is brought into question.

In the second half of the collection, Crapanzano examines the "transactional basis" of our emotions, which lies hidden behind culturally constructed ideas about the self and the psychology of emotion. Edgerton explores the power of cultural beliefs to overpower concerns for self-preservation among Zulu warriors during the nineteenth-century Anglo-Zulu war. In his essay entitled "Ghostbusters in Anthropology" Shweder proposes fusing the directive force of culture with its directive content, which he argues "would be tantamount to a revolutionary rethinking of the relationship between culture and nature, subjectivity and objectivity." Finally, the Spindlers discuss their abiding interest in the intersections of concepts of self and personhood with cultural change.

These essays are by no means homogeneous in their content or epistemology. They nonetheless constitute research on questions of importance not only to medical and psychological anthropologists but — as contributions to an understanding of the dynamic role of culture in mediating social structure and lived experience — to social-cultural anthropology in general.

— Linda Green, Editor